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RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC
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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PARM](#) [TSPL](#) [KNNP](#) [ETTC](#) [ENRG](#) [TRGY](#) [IN](#)
SUBJECT: CONGRESS INSIDER GIVES BLEAK VIEW OF NUCLEAR
CHANCES

REF: 07 NEW DELHI 4182

Classified By: A/Political Counselor Joel Ehrendreich for Reasons 1.4 (B and D)

¶1. (C) Manish Tewari, Secretary in the All India Congress Committee (AICC), told poloff April 3 that there was no chance the UPA government would risk the downfall of the government in order to complete the nuclear initiative. If the Congress Party called the Left's bluff, he thought that "90 percent of the UPA allies" would seek to form a Third Front government immediately. He asserted that general elections would take place in one year as scheduled, and dismissed any speculation that the Congress Party would risk Left withdrawal from the government to force early elections. An interim or minority government would have no credibility in the Nuclear Suppliers Group or IAEA, he contended. Poloff pointed out that U.S. officials have assured that they would work with any Congress-led government in power to complete the initiative. Tewari responded that while such a position might have clarified the U.S. view, it came across as desperate -- that all the U.S. cared about was finishing the nuclear deal.

¶2. (C) Tewari also expressed concern about the viability of completing the steps following the submission of the safeguards agreement to the IAEA, and particularly doubted the ability of the U.S. to craft a simple Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) exception. "There is no sense that you will be able to swing a clean exception," he related, and cited reports that recent meetings of the NSG focused on technical details and possible conditions to impose on India. He wondered why the Congress Party would risk power in the center when it was apparent that the U.S. could not guarantee an NSG exception. "It is not as done a deal as it seems," he cautioned.

¶3. (C) After poloff talked Tewari through his misgivings about the Hyde Act, NSG exception and the timeline, Tewari softened his stance and attempted to find a way around the Left's intransigence. Given that "there is no way the Left is going to allow us to initial the draft," he asked if the IAEA could circulate the draft agreement without India's consent. Circulating the draft would enable the NSG and IAEA Board of Governors process to begin, and if India could claim that the IAEA can distribute draft safeguards agreements without explicit permission, Tewari thought the Congress Party might be able to find a way forward. Poloff underlined that the IAEA Board must first approve the safeguards agreement before the NSG granted the exception. Moreover,

while he suspected that India would have to give permission to the IAEA, he promised Tewari to provide a more definitive answer.

Comment: Tewari's Fears Likely Reflect the Congress Party's

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¶4. (C) Tewari is known as a rising star in the Congress Party. Since poloff met him in August 2007 (reftel), he has acquired the role of Congress Party spokesman, as evidenced by frequent interruptions on his cell phone during which he strongly deflected accusations against Congress Party President Sonia Gandhi. His vocation as an attorney has also given him insight into the details of the 123 Agreement and Hyde Act, which likely shapes Congress Party views about the nuclear initiative as a whole. His apprehensions about the NSG likely reflect the Congress Party's, and his suspicion that the U.S. cannot deliver the goods may inform the Congress Party's political calculations and Gandhi's reluctance to risk a move forward. If possible, we should seek to reassure Congress leaders that the U.S. can indeed lead the charge in the NSG and produce a clean and direct exception for India without further belaboring specifics, but only after the draft safeguards agreement gets circulated and a Board meeting scheduled.

WHITE